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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/624,439	07/24/2000	Jonathan Ellenberg	072271.0118	5413

5073 7590 04/07/2009
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
2001 ROSS AVENUE
SUITE 600
DALLAS, TX 75201-2980

EXAMINER

FELTEN, DANIEL S

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3696

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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04/07/2009

ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

ptomail1@bakerbotts.com
glenda.orrantia@bakerbotts.com

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/624,439	Applicant(s) ELLENBERG ET AL.	
	Examiner DANIEL S. FELTEN	Art Unit 3696	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 October 2008.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11, 34, 35 and 40-45 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11, 34, 35 and 40-45 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 5/27/2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The claims remain rejected under ARKES because of the of the following issues:

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claims 1-11, 34-35 and 40-45 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential steps, such omission amounting to a gap between the steps.

See MPEP § 2172.01. The omitted steps are: determining an opening bid price by multiplying the cost of the goods to the provider times the auction pricing discount factor divided by a rewards point value. Steps relaying how the pricing discount factor is calculated to arrive at an opening bid price. Steps related to how reward points are determined.

4. Claims 1-11, 34-35 and 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential structural cooperative relationships of elements, such omission amounting to a gap between the necessary structural connections. See MPEP § 2172.01. The omitted structural cooperative relationships are: The structure which provides the determination of a minimum opening bid price. The structure that

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §101

5. 35 U.S.C. §101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

6. Claims 1-11, 34-35 and 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

7. Based on Supreme Court precedent (*Diamond v. Diehr*, 450 U.S. 175, 184 (1981); *Parker v. Flook*, 437 U.S. 584, 588 n.9 (1978); *Gottschalk v. Benson*, 409 U.S. 63, 70 (1972); *Cochrane v. Deener*, 94 U.S. 780, 787-88 (1876)) and recent Federal Circuit decisions, §101 process must (1) be tied to another statutory class (such as a particular apparatus) or (2) transform underlying subject matter (such as an article or materials) to a different state or thing (the Supreme Court recognized that this test is not necessarily fixed or permanent and may evolve with technological advances. *Gottschalk v. Benson*, 409 U.S. 63, 71 (1972)).

8. If neither of these requirements is met by the claim(s), the method is not a patent eligible process under 35 U.S.C. §101.

9. In this particular case, regarding the first test, in performing the steps of the claimed subject matter, there is no requirement that a machine be used for determining a minimum opening bid price, thus the claims are not considered sufficiently tied to another statutory class. Regarding the second test, since the claimed subject matter may be performed using only human intelligence, the steps do not sufficiently transform the underlying subject matter to be statutory.

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10. Claims 1-11, 34-35 and 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is directed to functional descriptive material. Functional descriptive material is nonstatutory when claimed as descriptive material per se, 33 F.3d at 1360, 31 USPQ2d at 1759. When functional descriptive material is recorded on some computer-readable medium, it becomes structurally and functionally interrelated to the medium and will be statutory in most cases since use of technology permits the function of the descriptive material to be realized. Compare *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 1583-84, 32 USPQ2d 1031, 1035 (Fed. Cir. 1994)(discussing patentable weight of data structure limitations in the context of a statutory claim to a data structure stored on a computer readable medium that increases computer efficiency) and *In re Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d 1354, 1360-61, 31 USPQ2d 1754, 1759 with *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1361, 31 USPQ2d at 1760 (claim to a data structure per se held nonstatutory). In this case the method claims presented does not

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

11. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

12. Claims 1-11, 34, 35 and 40-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Arkes (US 7,152,042).

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As in claim 1, Arkes discloses a method for receiving points from a customer using a computer terminal for merchandise being offered in the auction (see Arkes, fig. 10, Abstract, column 1, line 55 to column 2, line 14; and column 2, line 57 to column 3, line 3);

As in claim 2 and 41, receiving registration information from the customer (see Arkes, Abstract; column 1, lines 56-65; column 3, lines 17-23; and column 4, lines 37+; and column 12, lines 8-14);

As in claim 3 and 42, wherein the customer registration includes payment information (see column 9, lines 16-24);

As in claim 4 and 43, providing a preview of the merchandise being offered in the auction (see Arkes, column 1, lines 58-65);

As in claim 5 and 44, authenticating the customer (see fig. 9: 304; column 11, line 65-67) and allowing the customer to access a reward points balance (Abstract; column 1, line 56 to column 2, line 14)

As in claim 6, allowing the customer to purchase additional reward points for use in the auction (see column 10, lines 47-51; and column 12, lines 40-58);

As in claim 7 and 45, wherein the customer is allowed to purchase a specific number of reward points at an exchange rate (see column 12, lines 59-62),

As in claim 8, further comprising determining a cost for the reward points purchased and transmitting a request for payment for the cost of the reward points (see column 12, lines 59-62);

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As in claim 9, further comprising allowing a purchase of reward points on a floating basis (see column 12, lines 59-62)

As in claim 10, deducting reward points expended in the auction from the rewards point balance (see column 10, lines 37-44);

As in claim 11, determining a cost for purchasing reward points expending in the auction in excess of the customer's reward points balance and transmitting a request for payment for the cost of the reward points (see column 12, lines 59-62)

As in claim 1, 34 and 40, determining a minimum opening bid price by *applying an auction pricing discount factor* in reward points based on merchandise being auctioned and the time period of the auction (see fig 12. "Minimum Opening Bid 49");

As in claim 35, determining a bid increment.(see fig. 12 "Minimum Increment 5");

As in claim 40, receiving a bid in cash from a customer using a computer terminal for merchandise being offered in the auction (see column 12, lines 59-62),

wherein at least a portion of the bid is paid for by reward points converted to a cash value (see column 12, lines 59-62)

Conclusion

13. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to DANIEL S. FELTEN whose telephone number is (571)272-6742. The examiner can normally be reached on Flex.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Thomas Dixon can be reached on (571) 272-6803. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Daniel S Felten
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3696

/Daniel S Felten/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3696